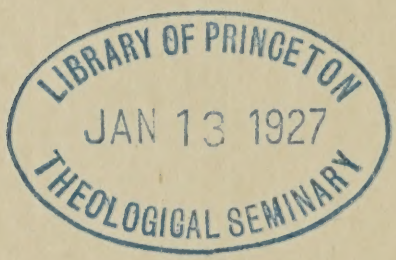

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HILAIRE BELLOC, *General Editor*

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE APPEAL TO REASON

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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH *AND* THE APPEAL TO REASON

BY
LEO WARD

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"L'homme est visiblement fait pour penser; c'est toute sa dignité et tout son merite; et tout son devoir est de penser comme il faut."—PASCAL

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

IF there is one idea more deeply rooted than another in the modern world outside the Catholic Church, it is the conception that some natural antagonism exists between the Catholic system and the conclusions, positive and negative, of the human reason working independently upon the universe in which it finds itself, and coming to its own final judgments.

By an irony which perpetually appears in the field of religious debate, that very faculty which should enable us to perceive the absence of conflict is made the cause of conflict. In proportion to the power of a man's reason can he distinguish categories one from another: in proportion to that power is he free from the error of confounding ideas with words and of confusing totally different principles because the formulæ for them may happen to contain similar phrases.

The belief that there is a necessary conflict between the Catholic system and the human reason is based upon two false conceptions which it is the special task of the Catholic apologist to

dispel. The first is the conception that the Catholic system consists in a number of detached affirmations with no logical connection binding them — a mere agglomeration — each unit of which is either fantastically marvellous or insane because it reposes upon no real ground for conviction. The second is the conception that a truth can *only* be known in one of two ways— by deductive proof from an established general principle, or by the direct appreciation of the senses and inductions from such direct appreciation.

Now both these conceptions are false. The Catholic system is an organic whole far more consistent than any philosophy opposed to it, or neutral to it. A man may reject it, but he cannot reject it on the ground of its particularism; for if he does that, he shows himself ignorant of his subject matter. The Catholic system is not one of many; it is not to be chosen out of a heap of similar things all making similar claims; it is unique. Alone of any system propounded to the mind of man it bears two marks which render it thus a thing of itself amid the turmoil of human thought and speculation, in that it proceeds from the most general conceptions of all on and down to its last details, and that it claims divine and in-

fallible authority. It is based upon a thorough examination of the last nature of things: beginning with the prime question, whether the purpose of things can be discovered at all, proceeding to the second, whether there be a God, and thence by successive steps to an examination of all that is necessary to be known for the higher end of man. But it does not *convince* by such a process. It convinces by the effect of a Personality, an authority manifest. Those conclusions which the Faith reaches in the processes of examination and propounds whether the hearer has examined them individually or no—a Personal God, human immortality, the Incarnation and all its consequences in the Church—are often separate from lesser experience; they are always (as are the foundation and implications of every science) intermixed with mystery—that is, with truths beyond, but not contrary to, reason. They are never of a kind which pure reason must reject.

And the second conception is false. It is not true that one cannot be sure of a thing save by deduction from a general principle, or by a direct appreciation through the senses. There is a third method, a method by which we recognise truth through a convergence of a vast number of

processes of different kinds through what might be called, in a mathematical metaphor, *integration.*

You may know that a tree is an oak tree without having seen it, deducing this truth from an already ascertained certitude that a tree is present in such and such a place, and that in view of the evidence nothing but an oak tree could be there. Or you may be certain of that oak tree by an exact physical examination, noting carefully the contour of many leaves, the nature of the bark, a specimen in section of the wood. But you are not only *as* sure, you are *more* sure, that your oak tree is an oak tree when you see it as a whole, though you see it from a hundred yards away, where you cannot perceive the detail of the bark or of the leaves—and you are sure through the faculty of integration. You have received an indefinite number of converging evidences in shape, colour, situation, etc. With no process of deductive thought and no close series of analysed physical tests, you say the thing is an oak tree.

There are two propositions in connection with the truth of the Faith and its supposed conflict with reason, which propositions reason itself can distinguish—but rarely does so. The first is the proposition that the truth of a system or of a

thing is established by reason; the second is the proposition that the truth of a system or a thing can *only* be established by reason. It is a characteristic confusion of many a modern mind that these totally variant statements are confounded one with another. If it be expected that the Faith shall be proved as a mathematical proposition is proved, then the expectation will be disappointed, and if anyone having the Faith be so foolish as to make the claim, he does the Faith an ill-service. But if, on the contrary, an opponent maintains that nothing is known or can be known save as truth dependent on mathematical proof is known, let him consider such truths as our recognition of personalities, our certitude in the external universe, the continuity of our individual moral responsibility—and any number of other certain facts which are not proved, but appreciated and only known by an essential quality in them conforming to what they should be. So it is with the Faith, which is held principally because it is found to conform to what the Divine Authority claims it should be.

H. BELLOC.

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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
and
THE APPEAL TO REASON

PART I

FAITH AND REASON

(*a*) *The Nature of the Appeal*

The title of this essay may seem to imply something far more ambitious than its author and editor really contemplate. It is not an apologetical treatise. Indeed it can hardly be described as an argument. Any attempt to present an adequate argument for Catholicism in the space of a hundred pages would indeed be an insult to the reader as well as an irreverence to the subject itself. The purpose of this little book is rather to suggest certain lines along which a non-Catholic student might profitably travel in order to gain a general view of the age-long controversial war which has been waged about the Catholic Church. That war has been conducted on many fronts throughout the civilised world. It has been waged among historians, philosophers, and men of science, as well as among students of public affairs. But, whatever side

we take, it is surely important to form a clear view of the real issues at stake in so large a controversy. At the lowest, it is certainly worth while to understand the motives which influence the conduct of at least one-sixth part of the human race, the largest religious body in Germany and the United States on the one hand, and in Poland, Spain and Brazil on the other, and to know how far that conduct is based upon religious principle or inspired by religious ideals. Surely it should be part of a liberal education to investigate a philosophy and an institution which have played so prominent a part in the history of mankind and have largely created the civilisation to which we belong. Yet how comparatively few among our fellow citizens in England or in America do really avail themselves of the means at their disposal for such an enquiry! Macaulay held that "there is not and never was upon this earth a work of human policy so well deserving of examination as the Roman Catholic Church." Yet he himself appears to have investigated it mainly at second hand from German Protestant sources! If, then, the present little book can act as any kind of inducement to its readers to undertake such a task, it will have achieved its purpose.

However, before entering on the subject itself, a word of explanation or apology is due to Protestant readers. In the present essay the word Christianity will be used for the sake of clearness as meaning the historic faith of the Catholic Church. Of course this does not imply a failure to appreciate the loyalty shown by Protestants to many Christian doctrines and principles which we hold in common. It merely means that the author, who has always been a Catholic, is not in a position to discuss interpretations of Christianity which are unfamiliar to him. As a Catholic he looks to a particular definite standard in faith and morals, and it is that standard which is at present under discussion. A Catholic is often aware of his own moral poverty in the presence of his Protestant friends. But he claims to be the unworthy representative of a whole religious system from which their Christian doctrines are derived, and of which they are part. And he is convinced that in the long run it will be found that the part involves the whole and cannot be maintained without it. To say this is no more than to confess the faith of a Catholic before proceeding to discuss "The Catholic Church and the Appeal to Reason."

What then is the nature of the appeal to rea-

son which is made by Catholic Christianity? It is based upon the belief that the Divine Reason itself has been revealed to men in an historic Person and in a visible society established by Him. The Catholic Church teaches, first, that the Person of Christ is the person of the eternal Word or Mind of God, the Son equal to the Father, "through whom all things were made and without Whom was made nothing that was made" (St. John i. 3). And, secondly, that He who was truly God and equal to the Father "took the form of a servant . . . humbled Himself . . . [and] became obedient unto death" (Phil. ii. 8), in order to show men the true purpose of life on earth and teach them all the truths necessary for its realisation.

To this it adds that the divine life and teaching are perpetuated on earth by a society of men which St. Paul identifies with Christ Himself as the "body" of which He is the "head" (Eph. iv. 11-16, etc.). This body of men has a divine mission (1) to *all* nations, (2) teaching them *all* that Christ has commanded, and (3) exercising His authority in *all* ages: "Go ye and teach all nations . . . . teaching them whatsoever things I have commanded you and behold I am with you always" (St. Matt. xxviii. 18-20).

Therefore, as the expression of the Divine Reason, the teaching of the Catholic Church must be (a) one and unchanging, consistent with itself in every part; (b) reasonable and so accessible to the human mind; (c) containing, at least by implication, all truth which human wisdom has ever realised or can realise in the sphere of religion; but also (d) going beyond what human wisdom can fully comprehend or could discover for itself.

Let us consider for a moment the meaning of this last consequence: the divine teaching goes *beyond* (though never *against*) human reason. God is infinite and we are infinitesimally small by comparison. Indeed there is no comparison possible. It is therefore to be expected that part of His revelation will reach beyond the limits of our earth-bound reason, which must itself be gradually purified in order to understand more of it. Reason must be used as far as it will go; but it must acknowledge its own limitations. It may therefore be thoroughly reasonable to acknowledge some of the most fundamental truths as *mysteries,* a mystery being defined as "a truth which is above reason but revealed by God."

The Catholic then may use his reason as far as it will go. His reason, indeed, justifies his ac-

ceptance of a divine authority. This authority (a) confirms many truths arrived at by human reason alone, (b) corrects many fallacies of his individual reason, and (c) teaches supernatural truths which, though they transcend human reason, complete its conclusions. He can use his reason fruitfully on these truths known by faith and so arrive at a certain degree of understanding of what he cannot comprehend in its fulness. But, if he is confronted with a situation in which his own reason seems to be opposed to that of the Church, he holds that it is more reasonable to submit his limited mind to the unlimited wisdom of Christ's divine revelation. All depends on the validity of the Church's claim to a divine mission. Our Lord Himself did not offer proofs of individual doctrines, but of His divine authority to teach. Neither need those to whom He said, "he that heareth you heareth Me" (St. Luke x. 16). Reason then *may* be used in the defence or analysis of individual doctrines, since all are parts of a consistent whole. But we *must* be able to "give a reason for the hope" (I Peter iii. 15) on which these individual doctrines are based.

The Catholic Church has always insisted on the appeal to Reason as the only secure basis for

consistency and the only means of saving religion from the endless vagaries of human imagination and inclination. Cannot mere "feeling" lead us into paths which we would infinitely rather never have trod? Only reason and principle can put up a tolerable fight against the undeniable perversity of our nature, and even these can only do so if they are completed and crowned by a reasonable faith (which goes beyond them while it completes and directs them).

This age-long insistence on the appeal to reason is winning for the Catholic Church the grateful recognition of many of the ablest minds to-day among the younger generation in France, Italy, and other countries. These are simultaneously returning to logical realism and to the Faith, and are acutely conscious of the need of an absolute standard in ethics. But in 1906, when Pope Pius X condemned the Modernist doctrine that "Faith is a blind religious sense springing from the depth of the subconscious under the influence of the heart," and affirmed instead that it is "a true assent of the intelligence to truth," he was accused of having declared war on the whole of modern thought. To a sceptical world hesitating between idealist and pragmatist philosophy such words seemed the merest obscur-

antism. Even now, though the tide has turned in France and is turning elsewhere, the popular philosophy of the age is still violently opposed to the use of logic in the sphere of religion.

(*b*) *Regarding First Principles*

In his *Cruise of the Nona* Mr. Belloc has defined the popular philosophy which still so largely occupies the Western mind outside the Catholic Church, as a "sceptical pantheism." [1] He believes that it came among us as an emotional reaction against the rationalism of the eighteenth century, and therefore (in its most popular expression) took the form of a reaction against reason itself. It dispenses with intellectual analysis and intellectual foundations by an affirmation that truths can be recognised by feeling and imagination. It thinks to find an intellectual justification in the words of Pascal, "the heart has its reasons, of which the head knows nothing." [2] Mr. Belloc writes of it: "this emotional protest against rationalism appealed to the vivid response awakened in the human heart

[1] P. 247.

[2] Pascal's *Pensées* (Brunschvicg edition, Hachette, 1920), p. 458. All citations from the *Pensées* in this book are from this edition.

by the life of nature. Such a trend could only end in Pantheism: and Pantheist the modern world, outside the Catholic body, has become."

It is certainly true, but nevertheless surprising, that this movement often appeals to Pascal as its prophet. In spite of the repulsion which we personally feel for his Jansenist tendencies and for what was really a grossly unfair treatment of the Jesuit moralists in his *Provincial Letters,* it is difficult to imagine Pascal among the modernists! His *Pensées* have been recently acclaimed by the Catholic bishops of France among the glories of Catholic thought. He himself proclaimed his loyalty to the Church of which Rome is the centre, in spite of words uttered impatiently against the Holy See and often quoted,[3] and it is at least difficult to maintain that he was opposed to the use of reason in matters of religion.[4] It

[3] Professor H. Chevalier of Grenoble, one of the ablest living critics of Pascal, is convinced that he retracted them before his death. See his *Pascal,* 7th edition, Paris: Librairie Plon, p. 338, etc.

[4] It may be objected that Pascal wrote, "it is the heart which *feels God* and not the reason" (p. 458) and "to know God (connaitre) without loving Him is really not to know Him." But then he also says that it is the heart which perceives that there are three dimensions in space (p. 459). As M. Chevalier has so clearly shown (in his *Pascal,* pp. 302, etc.) this knowledge of the heart which Pascal incorrectly calls "faith" is not regarded by him as a substitute for the use of reason in religion

is true that like Newman he condemns a mere rationalism, that "liberalism" which Newman describes as "the use of reason where it cannot be brought to a successful issue and is therefore out of place." But if ever reason, rightly used, was made the whole secret of man's dignity it was by Pascal. "I can conceive a man," he writes, "without hands, feet, head (for it is only experience which teaches us that the head is more necessary than the feet). But I cannot conceive a man without thought: it would be a stone or a beast!" [5] True, he admits that in practice man is usually guided by imagination and not by reason. But such guidance is actually his greatest misery, since our imagination is the plaything of sickness and self-interest, of the senses and of pride. His denunciation of it is characteristically

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as far as it will go. "Would to God," writes Pascal, "that we knew all things by instinct and feeling. But nature refuses us this benefit; on the contrary she has given us very little knowledge of things in this way; the rest can only be acquired by reasoning. That is why those to whom God has given the faith (la religion) by a feeling of the heart are happy and legitimately persuaded. But to those who have it not we can only give it by reasoning" (pp. 459, 460). Moreover he defines the normal method of reason thus: "Principles are felt; propositions concluded; and the whole with certitude though by different ways." On his use of the word "feeling" see Chevalier, p. 305.

[5] *Pensées*, p. 486.

vigorous. "It is the deceptive part of man, mistress of error and falsehood, and all the more misleading (fourbe) because it is not always so; for it would be an infallible rule of truth if it were only an infallible rule of untruth. But being usually false it is not stamped with its true nature, but it stamps truth and falsehood with the same character." [6] Pascal, then, can hardly be accused of substituting imagination for thought. Indeed, in the famous passage so often quoted he maintains that our very hearts have "reasons"; and reason cannot contradict reason. But reason can recognise its own limitations, and this recognition he regards as supremely reasonable.[7] So he comes to the conclusion that there are "two excesses, to exclude reason, and to admit nothing else." [8]

What, then, are these "reasons of the heart" to which he refers in the fragment so often quoted? We think that his meaning can fairly be stated thus: There are stages in all investigation when the reason itself is most reasonable in admitting the truth of something which it cannot understand. For instance, there would seem

[6] P. 363.

[7] "Il n 'y a rien de si conforme a la raison que ce désaveu de la raison" (pp. 456, 457).

[8] Pp. 451-459.

to be an element which is not purely rational in the acceptance of first principles in the moral order as well as in the mathematical, in the answer to such questions as "Does anything exist?" or "Is there any purpose in things?" "Have I the power to think or choose?" Such answers, he thinks, are given by the heart rather than by the head. "Principles are felt"; he writes, "propositions concluded."

Here it is important to note that he differs, at least in expression, from the traditional Catholic philosophy.[9] Most Catholic philosophers would contend that such first principles are apprehended by the head, *i. e.* by a simple act of the intelligence, as axioms are apprehended. They would attribute the failure to apprehend them to the self-centred nature of man which prevents him from seeing the true proportion of things. Therefore they would say: "Purify the heart and Reason will see the truth"; whereas Pascal would say, "Purify the heart and *it* will see the truth." But even such perceptions of first principles are ascribed by Pascal to "*reasons* of the

[9] I have here ventured to suggest an application to Pascal of Fr. Marin-Sola's criticism of Newman, *i.e.* that on the subject of faith and reason it is in *expression* (not in *thought*) that he really differs from traditional Catholic philosophy.

heart." They cannot go against reason. Above all, they must not proceed merely from the imagination, a danger against which he constantly warns us. But we may note in passing that, whether they are recognized by the head or by the heart, such first principles are as easy (or as difficult) of recognition to the simplest as to the deepest intelligence. So, also, are the most obvious (and most essential) deductions from them.

Let us see, then, how Pascal actually treats the question of such a first principle. We will take the most urgent of all in his eyes: *Is there a purpose in things?* For Pascal the admission of "a purpose in things" involves by implication the whole Catholic idea of God. He sees only two reasonable possibilities, the full Catholic conception of God on the one hand, and doubt on the other, and he appears to be asking us to wager between these two. But this is a typically French point of view, and we need not expect a contemporary English or American reader to adopt it. William James protested against such an alternative. But, as we shall see, it is the question of whether there is any purpose in life which is really the subject of his famous

"wager." [10] Let us therefore state it in these terms: We have to stake everything on one of these two decisions, either (1) that there *is* a purpose in things (and therefore for us a purpose in life): or (2) that there is no purpose in things. We cannot really refuse to wager, for by doing so we imply that (for us at least) there is no purpose in life and therefore we are justified in living merely according to inclination.

Pascal's famous argument is addressed to the typical man of the world who is wasting his time—making money or amusing himself with studies or sport (treating these things not as a means to the end, but as the real purpose of his existence). He is trying to induce him to take life seriously. He therefore argues that in practice he cannot help staking all on one or other of these propositions: *A*, that there is a purpose in life, or *B*, that there is not. He knows that human selfishness, however we may disguise it, is always prompting him to stake everything on *B*. Therefore he tries to show him that it is infinitely more reasonable—even from the point of view of self-interest—to stake every-

[10] In saying this I am adopting Professor Chevalier's view, which seems to me obviously true, that the 'wager' is intended to *precede* all discussions of evidence or arguments for religion.

thing on *A*. For, he says, if you stake all on *B* and *A* is the truth, you lose an eternal good: whereas, if you stake all on *A* and *B* is the truth, you lose only temporal pleasures which will soon pass.

Refusal to face this issue is, in Pascal's eyes, inexcusable. He will not indulge with toleration and sympathy those who ignore it. "This negligence in a matter which concerns their very selves, their eternity, their all, I find irritating rather than 'touching.' " [11] Mere self-interest, he holds, should rouse us from such folly. What are the few unsatisfying pleasures of a selfish life during a few years compared with the fearful necessity they may entail of being annihilated or punished for ever? And he adds, "il n'y a rien de plus reél que cela, ni de plus terrible." [12] "There is nothing more real or more terrible than this."

But, in point of fact, how do many men argue with themselves? He describes what he believes to be a typical point of view, and makes an imaginary philosopher say:

> I do not know who put me in the world, or what the world is, or what I am; I am in a terrible ignorance of all things: I do

[11] "M'irrite plus qu'elle ne m'attendrit" (p. 417).
[12] P. 417.

not know what my body is, or my senses, or my soul, or that part of me which is thinking what I am saying, which reflects on all things and on itself, and which knows itself no more than it knows the rest. I see these awful spaces of the universe which enclose me, and I find myself attached to a corner of this vast expanse without knowing why I am placed in this place rather than in another, or why this short lifetime of mine is given to me rather than to someone else in the eternity which preceded me or that which follows me. I only see infinities on all sides which enclose me as an atom and as a shadow, which lasts an instant and does not return. All that I know is that I must soon die and the thing of which I know least is that death, which I know not how to escape.

As I know not whence I came or whither I go; so also I only know that on quitting this world I shall fall for ever either into nothingness or into the hands of an outraged God, without knowing which of these lots will be eternally mine. And yet from all this I conclude that I ought to pass all the days of my life without dreaming of making an investigation in regard to my destiny (sans songer à chercher ce qui doit m'arriver). Perhaps I *might* be able to clear up my doubts; but I do not want to take the trouble, nor take one step towards this investigation; and, afterwards, while treating with contempt those who shall devote

> themselves to this labour, I intend to go forward without looking ahead or fearing, towards this great event, and allow myself a soft passage to death, being uncertain as to the eternity of my future state."[23]

And Pascal adds, "truly it is a glory to religion that it has such unreasoning men among its enemies."[24]

To Pascal, then, it is not merely morally but intellectually contemptible to wager on *B*, *i.e.* to refuse to admit a serious purpose in things. The mere common sense of self-interest should make us see that we really gain all by betting on *A* and lose all by betting on *B*. Moreover, is not the practical acceptance of *B* the very suicide of reason itself?

From all this, then, we may conclude two things: (1) That it is legitimate and reasonable to devote at least as thorough a rational investigation to the problem of the purpose of life, that is, the problem of religion, as to any other subject; and (2) that it is in the highest degree unreasonable not to do so.

That is why Pascal classes the serious enquirer with the sincere Christian for intellectual and moral dignity; for the one is seeking, and the other has found, "the light of life." In this he

[23] Pp. 418-419. [24] P. 419.

is at one with St. Justin Martyr, St. Thomas, and the whole tradition of Catholic thought. But to which shall we ascribe his acceptance of this great first principle of a purpose in things—to reasons of the head or of the heart? Surely to both at once.[15]

(c) *Reason and Conscience versus Imagination*

We may then (without danger to our faith in reason itself) admit the possibility of a moral element in the practical acceptance of first principles as well as of truths which are beyond our reason. But is this element of the heart, or moral sense, to be found *only* in our perception of first principles and truths which are beyond reason? Surely not. It is often necessary to enlist it on the side of reason against imagination, in order to induce a true view of the evidence. Copernicus had to choose between reason and imagination in weighing the evidence for the theory that the earth goes round the sun, and not *vice versa.* reason said one thing, imagination another.

[15] The scholastic philosopher would maintain that the existence of a purpose in things is demonstrated from the order of the universe. Pascal does not deny this, but discusses how the ordinary man can be induced to a practical acknowledgment of this primary truth.

And this problem arises in regard to almost all the greater truths, owing to the fact that our imagination is earth-bound and limited. There is therefore a moral element in the acceptance even of truths most rationally proved. Imagination says one thing, reason another; and the heart or conscience must decide which it will obey.

Let us take another instance. We read in the Gospel narratives, how Our Lord blamed the Apostles because they were afraid of hunger after they had twice seen him multiply fishes and loaves. The first experience of this miracle should have taught them something. But even after it they were sceptical and astonished at seeing Christ walking on the water. Why? "Because they understood not concerning the loaves, for their *heart* was blinded" (St. Mark vi. 52). So Our Lord performed the miracle a second time. Once should have been enough for the reason, but once was not enough for the imagination. Therefore Our Lord blames them as morally culpable when they complain, "we have no bread." His words (if we may say so with all reverence) are characteristically stern: "Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet know or understand? Have you still your *heart*

blinded? Having eyes, do you not see? and having ears do you not hear, nor remember? When I broke the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?" They say to him "twelve." "When also the seven loaves among four thousand, how many baskets?" They answer "seven." Then He says to them, "How do you not understand?" (St. Mark viii. 16-21.) He appeals simply to their reason. He had proved Himself master of the elements. It was therefore unreasonable on their part to fear in His presence. It was imagination, not reason, which made them fear.

Thus, normally, the reasons of the heart are supplementary to those of the head. At no time can they contradict them, because reason cannot go against reason.

But reason often demands the acceptance of truths which it cannot understand. Here also the imagination gets in our way and deceives us. It assures us, for instance, that we *can* understand the laws of nature because they appear to follow a uniform course. But how (in the name of reason) can we be said to understand a thing when we only know its course and not its cause? We know that for the purpose

of our natural existence we are obliged to accept in practice such truths as the existence of an external world and our own power to investigate it reasonably. But, in doing so, we are really accepting truths which are quite beyond our reason. We only realise how true this is when science presents us with truths which are not only beyond our reason but also beyond our imagination,[16] as, of instance, when Sir Oliver Lodge contends that the atoms which compose an apparently solid block of marble are themselves composed of electrons *the spaces between which are really as much greater than those electrons as the spaces between the planets are* greater than those planets.[17] If this is a truth of science it is equally a "mystery" of science. We bow our heads and make an act of faith. And it is thoroughly reasonable to do so. It is reason acknowledging truths which it cannot fully understand. But why is it that we make such an act of faith? Because first of all our very being (call it heart or head) demands the practical acceptance of certain first principles. Then reason demands the accept-

[16] "Non pas seulement incomprehensible mais inconcevable" (See Chevalier's *Pascal*, p. 344).

[17] See Sir Oliver Lodge, *Modern Views on Matters* (The Romanes Lecture, 1903), p. 8.

ance of various conclusions *from* those first principles. We may be personally incapable of drawing these conclusions for ourselves, but we have a solid conviction that the scientific expert could demonstrate them to the complete satisfaction of our reason. The whole of science then is accepted by us as a system of truth because the exigencies of our being demand the acceptance of certain first principles, such as that *things do exist*. Then reason does the rest. Similarly the whole of Catholic Theology is accepted by me because the exigencies of my very being demand the acceptance of certain first principles, such as that *things have a purpose*. Reason demands certain great deductions which follow immediately on the acceptance of a purpose in things. A purpose in things implies an end for which they exist. An End implies a Cause. A Cause cannot be less than its effects, *e. g.* the Cause of nature's laws cannot really be subject to them; the Cause of my personality cannot really have less of personality than I have. He can only have less of my limitations, etc. Or let us take another line of argument. A purpose in things implies a purpose in me, a purpose in my actions. Of course, mere logic cannot decide whether this purpose is

mechanical or moral. But in practice the exigencies of my very being demand belief in *some* degree of moral choice. Call it a reason of the heart or of the head, my power to choose whether I will write these words or not is for me an axiom. Therefore a purpose in things implies a *moral* purpose in me because I have some power of choice. Therefore it means a Moral Law, obedience to which is the fulfilment of the purpose for which I am made. I may be mistaken as to what is right or what is wrong. But I cannot doubt that there *is* a moral law. Its existence is involved in the two axioms, (1) that there is a purpose in things, and (2) that I have some degree of moral choice.

But is there a real analogy between the acceptance of these doctrines and the acceptance of the doctrines of experimental science?

Let us put the two things side by side. The experimental scientist bases his investigations on the *practical* acceptance of certain first principles which cannot be formally proved. Among these are (1) the existence of things, (2) his freedom to investigate them, and (3) the validity of human reason. The religious philosopher (who is investigating the cause

rather than the course of things) adds one more first principle: that things have a purpose. Each of them then proceeds to argue. (1) Each uses reason as far as it will go. (2) Each finds it necessary to postulate laws which are beyond reason because they are the only "laws" which cover the facts under discussion. Reason approves this act of faith even though imagination boggles at it. And (3) each then can experimentally confirm the validity of these laws by testing their effects in particular cases. These three processes, following on the acceptance of first principles, are the only possible mental processes for rational men, and the Catholic Church insists that they must be admitted in the sphere of religion. Failure to admit them has resulted, outside the Church, in that sceptical Pantheism which admits or denies truths according to its moods, thereby implying that nothing is really true or can be known as such.

These three processes might be given three mottoes taken from the New Testament. The first is, after all, but an application of St. Peter's injunction, that we should be able to give "a reason for the hope that is in us" (I St. Peter iii. 15). The second, Our Lord's own saying, "He that followeth Me walketh not in darkness but

hath the light of life . . ." (St. John viii. 12); and, the third, Our Lord's assurance that, "He that doth the works shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God" (St. John vii. 17). This last, of course, does not cover the whole field of possible experimental testing of the evidence for the faith. That testing may include for the man of to-day such things as (1) an historical investigation of whether Our Lord really did claim to be God, (2) an historical investigation of whether the Church has ever contradicted herself in her definitions of faith, and (3) a purely scientific investigation of the possibility of Our Lord's miracles by an examination of the evidence for contemporary miracle. Pascal thought this of the highest value.[15] We can thus examine the hundreds of medical certificates relating to modern miracles at Lourdes; or (if we are doctors) make a personal examination of the cases there. Of course none of these three lines of investigation is *necessary*, but each must be admitted as valid and permissible. They are not *necessary* because, when once our reason has arrived at the conviction that only Christianity solves the problem of our existence and "covers the facts," we arrive by the assistance of God's

[15] *Pensées et Opuscules*, pp. 17, etc.

grace at a certitude which does not require (though of course it does not preclude) further investigations. That is why Our Lord insists far more on a moral loyalty to the doctrines we have accepted, a loyalty shown by living up to them. "He that doth the works shall learn of the doctrine whether it be of God."

Of course, a man may come to the decision that we cannot admit such first principles as (a) a moral choice, or (b) a purpose in life. But in that case he will inevitably start his investigations with a bias against the very possibility of an historic Incarnation or of an historic Divine Revelation of any kind; and will not this bias affect his judgment of the evidence?

We may sum up, then, in the words of St. Thomas Aquinas: "Belief," he says, "is an *act of the understanding* adhering to Divine Truth," though he adds that it is made "by command of the *will*" which, in its turn, is "moved by the grace of God."

But Mr. Belloc reminds us that the modern "sceptical Pantheist" makes his appeal to Pascal. So to Pascal he shall go.

PART II

DIVINE AND HUMAN REASON

(*a*) *Man's Problem and God's Solution*

Pascal imagines himself saying to an agnostic friend, "One must admit that there is something astonishing about the Christian Religion." To which his friend replies that he thinks so only because he was born in it. To this Pascal answers that, on the contrary, that fact would rather influence him against it for fear of being unduly prejudiced in its favour. And yet he adds, "Although I was born in it I find it astonishing."[1]

What then does the mind of this "grand rationaliste" (as M. Chevalier calls him) find most astonishing in Christianity? It appears to have been this: that Christianity explains man to himself.

Let us consider his grounds for this assertion.

According to Pascal all human interpretations of man's life are based either upon man's greatness or upon his misery. Only Christianity is

[1] P. 606.

based on both at once. Let us see what this involves. All other religions or philosophies seek either the expansion and completion of man's natural life or the extinction of it. They either worship human life or fear it. Their conception of a future state, for instance, is either a sublimer form of man's present life or an escape from it: either some sort of Elysian Fields or some sort of Nirvana.

This dilemma is found both in the highest and lowest forms of pagan philosophy. It is man's potential greatness to which all forms of stoicism appeal; and this same appeal is found in the moral idealism of an Epictetus or a Marcus Aurelius. On the other hand, the misery of our human weakness is the basis of the mystical pessimism which seeks a Nirvana or escape from life. Perhaps one might say that the idealism of the West tends to be optimistic, seeking the fulness of life; that of the East, to be pessimistic, the Western mind being predominantly active, the Eastern reflective and mystical.

But the Western also may be pessimistic, only his pessimism will be less mystical. This temper is seen in the philosophies which have dwelt on man's weakness and limitations, as those of the later Epicureans, Cynics, Sceptics, and

Pyhrronists, and these are discussed by Pascal in the person of their great French disciple Montaigne.

But Pascal's theory can be extended and applied to more modern controversies. When the popular thought of nineteenth-century Europe attempted to formulate a philosophy based on the discoveries and conclusions of Darwin, it erected instinctively two rival philosophies, both postulating a monistic and largely mechanical conception of evolution. These were a determinist Pessimism and a determinist Optimism, based respectively on the misery and the greatness of man. The determinist atmosphere has so largely passed away that it is hard for us to realise how strong was its hold on the popular mind of the last generation. It was taken for granted among millions of our fellow men (1) that everything could be explained by natural laws, and (2) that, as these laws are unchangeable, everything is inevitably predetermined: that nature is a blind machine of which we are parts. This idea had to be applied to everything: to history, psychology, religion, morals, and even art. And the French, who applied it most vigorously and most completely, were the first to discover that it will not work. The point at which it first

broke down was the study of man in contemporary works of fiction. Man had to be considered as a mere creature of heredity and environment, "un théorème qui marche." His actions were inevitable—the outcome of his natural inclination *plus* the influence of his environment. This type of novel in France and Russia was known as the "experimental novel" (a name which linked it with the fashionable worship of experimental science). Inevitably it was pessimistic. If man is the creature of his inclinations he comes to disaster. It reflected the logical pessimism which has wrought such havoc in Russia and which still threatens France herself with ruin.[2]

But this pessimist evolutionary doctrine in France and Russia has hardly proved more dangerous to our civilisation than its optimistic counterpart in Germany. The symbol of that philosophy is the Superman. The popular philosophy in Germany, described by Professor Cramb and so many others, was a determinist optimism, just as in France and Russia it was a determinist pessimism. It was based on man's

[2] An admirable account of the pessimistic fiction of the experimental school and the reaction against it is given by M. Georges Fonsgrive in his *Evolution des Idées dans la France Contemporaine.*

greatness, just as French determinism was based on his misery. It was justified by an appeal to the law of the survival of the fittest. Man was regarded as something essentially good in himself, and therefore inevitably on the high road to perfection. A law of progress in the human species was postulated which is still popular.

Man must therefore "realise himself," express and develop and assert himself to the utmost. Again the result was undesirable both in private and public morals. Naturalism, whether it is optimist or pessimist, is fatal to man, and only Christianity can tell him why. Greek nature-worship ended in a distortion of nature itself; German "culture," in a destruction of much which we call civilization. Even the high moral idealism of Epictetus serves only to remind the ordinary man of his own weakness, and tempts him to despair. And the Hindu philosophy of an escape from life, though it may take really high and even holy forms, is equally liable to produce degeneration and reaction.

All these philosophies assume that man's present state, for good or ill, is a normal state. The Christian philosophy, on the other hand, rests on the assumption that man's present state is abnormal. The Catholic Church acts as a

psychoanalist towards the human race, reminding it of something which it has almost wholly forgotten, and this is why its religion is able to "fit the facts" and solve the problem of life. Christianity tells us that the first man (Adam) received from God, along with his human nature, a *supernatural* life of conscious union with God Himself, a life whose whole tendency would have been towards God and would therefore have raised him above sin and suffering and death. But this life, being one of love, had to be accepted by his free-will, choosing between self-love and the love of God. The Church tells us that in making his choice the first man acted on behalf of the entire human race, which is an organic whole; that he actually chose self-love and thereby lost this God-ward supernatural life and was left as one among the other animals, though really a dethroned monarch and still possessed of an immortal soul and intelligence. (It may be well for a moment to recall the theological terms for these things that we may follow the argument more easily: The state of supernatural life is often called simply "super-nature" in contrast with "nature," its loss is the Fall, the sin whereby it was lost is called "original sin.")

There is then in man a twofold principle.

There is "nature," of which the tendency since the Fall is towards self (by pride and lust) and therefore *away from* God, Who is the true centre of things: and there is also supernature. But nature is incomplete by itself and requires supernature to perfect it. A second principle however is found in man whereby his supernature is in process of restoration. And this restored supernature is called "grace." This restoration derives from God Himself who took our human nature, paying Himself the full penalty of its rebellion and showing us how to pass with Him from death to life. St. Paul therefore sums it up when he says that "as in Adam *all* died, so in Christ *all* are made alive," and it is reiterated by the Church in every age: "Christ died for all men," writes Pope Benedict XV (in his first Encyclical), "and there is no one who is excluded from the benefit of this redemption." (It is a Jansenist error condemned in the famous Bull *Unigenitus* to hold that there is "no *grace* outside the Church.")

Let us however clear up a few points which are often misunderstood. Had the state of supernature never been lost the Kingdom of God would have been realised among men in this present world. But Adam, like the angels and

like ourselves, had to choose between living in a God-centred world and in a self-centred world and, like some of the angels and most of ourselves, he chose the latter and lost the privilege which we call the "supernatural life." Still it is offered again to us by Christ and we have wills free to accept or reject it. This short lifetime of ours will decide which shall be our choice: a God-centred eternity in heaven or a self-centred eternity in hell.[3]

[3] It need hardly be added that this doctrine has nothing whatever to do with physical science, though it appears to constitute (in the eyes of writers like Bishop Barnes and Dean Inge) a condemnation of physical "evolution." Even though we hold that both body and soul were affected by the loss of the supernatural life with which they had been endowed, this fact remains equally true. It is certainly probable that the human intellect was obscured by the diversion from a God-centred to a self-centred outlook. It is (in practice and in fact) strangely misled by the imagination. But to hold that nature itself has been distorted by the Fall is not involved in the Tridentine definition of faith (see the Council of Trent, 5th, Session 1, in Denzinger). For a clear discussion of these points see *Anthropology and the Fall* by Humphrey Johnson (Blackwell, Oxford).

There is perhaps one other point which we should make clear. The Catholic doctrine of the Fall does not imply the verbal historicity of the first three chapters of Genesis. But it *does* imply their historicity in so far as they proclaim the fundamental principles of the organic unity of the human race and of the First Man's headship thereof. The Church insists that our humanity is derived from Adam (not Eve), though this obviously does not imply a literal acceptation of the account

(*b*) *Pascal's Argument*

Let us then return to Pascal's treatment of this fundamental Christian doctrine of two principles in man, nature, and grace, and see how he applies it to the interpretation of man's life and the truth of Christianity.

All other systems, he says, are based on one or other of these half-truths, the greatness of man or his misery. The philosophies of pride, built upon man's greatness, are not necessarily more spiritual, or those built upon his misery more carnal. Whether taken as chiefly spirit or chiefly matter, man's present state is treated as something normal, whereas it is in truth an anomaly. Any thought which fails to recognise this fails to give real happiness, because either (1) it builds on man's greatness and then stumbles upon his misery, or (2) it builds on his misery and knows nothing of his true greatness. Pascal's argument is admirably summarised in a passage of his

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given of how that humanity was conferred (namely, "God *breathed* on Adam and he became a living soul"). The essential point is that Adam is head of the human race and that our common humanity (including the humanity of the first woman) is derived from him. It is Adam's sin which counts, not Eve's. "Through one man sin came into the world" (Rom. v. 12). "As in Adam all died, so in Christ all are made alive" (I Cor. v. 22).

"Entretien avec M. de Saci," in which he contrasts the philosophies of Epictetus and Montaigne.

> I cannot deny that in reading [Montaigne] and comparing him with Epictetus I have found that they were assuredly the most illustrious defenders of the two most celebrated schools of thought, and the only ones which are in accord in reason since one cannot help following one of these two roads in order to know whether (1) there is a God and therefore that man's supreme good is in Him, or (2) that it is uncertain and therefore the true good is uncertain since man is incapable of (attaining to) it. . . . . [But he continues]:
>
> It seems to me that the source of the errors of these two schools is that of not having known that man's present state differs from that of his creation: so that the one observing some traces of his first greatness and ignoring its corruption has treated human nature as healthy and without need of repair, which leads to the height of pride; whilst the other, perceiving his present misery and ignoring his first dignity, treats nature as necessarily weak and irreparable, which precipitates him into a despair of finding a true good, and thence into an extreme cowardice. . . . Thus it comes about from these two imperfect lights that the one, knowing man's duties and ignoring

his helplessness, is lost in presumption, whilst the other, knowing his helplessness and not his duty, falls into cowardice, from which it should follow . . . that in putting them together one would form a perfect morality. But instead of this peace there would only result a war and general destruction . . . . for the one establishing certitude and the other doubt, the one man's greatness and the other his weakness, each destroys the truth as well as the falsity of the other. So they cannot endure separately because of their defect, nor unite because of their opposition, and thus they break and annihilate each other to make room for the Gospel. For [the Gospel] reconciles these contrarieties by a wholly divine art, and uniting all that is true and expelling all that is false it creates a truly heavenly wisdom, wherein these opposites, which are incompatible as human doctrines, are reconciled. And the reason is that the wise men of the world place the contraries in one and the same subject, and this cannot be; whereas the faith teaches us to put them in different subjects: all that is weak appertaining to nature and all that is powerful appertaining to grace.[4] This is the truly astonishing and new union which only God can teach, and He alone accomplish, and which is an image and effect of the ineffable

[4] An exaggeration in the direction of Jansenism may be noticed here. But it does not affect Pascal's general argument.

union of the two natures in the one person of the God-Man.[5]

(c) *Divine and Human Faiths*

This passage from Pascal indicates with admirable clearness the nature of the appeal which the divine reason embodied in the Church makes to the human reason of the individual man. St. John says that Christ is the Word (the Logos, or divine reason, wherein the half-truths of human wisdom can alone find their reconciliation). To the Western lover of life Christianity says, "If you would gain your life you must first lose it," but to the Eastern ascetic, "If you are really prepared to lose your life you shall also find it." Christianity offers a new life and a new outlook which are supernatural. At first sight they appear to go diametrically against the life and outlook of nature, and this fact is emphasised throughout the New Testament. But in the end they are seen to perfect and complete it. All that is true in Paganism is preserved and enforced by the Church, for it is a part of that truth of which Christianity is the complete revelation. When Christianity came into the world it expressed itself naturally and easily in the

[5] *Pensées et Opuscules*, pp. 159-160.

language of the civilisation in which it found itself, though it was violently at war with the principles of that civilisation. Roman law and Greek philosophy were "baptised" and used for the propagation of the Gospel. Local religious traditions had largely degenerated and given place to scepticism or mere superstition. They could not stand before the internationalising process begun by the Roman Empire and which is still unfinished in our own time. Only a universal religion could challenge the prevailing scepticism, and the worship of Christ soon became the only serious rival to the worship of Caesar.

The philosophies which were supplanting the old cults found in the Church a rival as well as an ally. Their language and modes of thought were used to express a system of thought which went far beyond them. It proclaimed with the stoics that religion is a life lived in union with the Word (Logos), but it regarded the Word as a personal Creator, not a mere immanent reason or soul of the world. It taught with Plato that man's soul is immortal, but showed confidently how it could achieve its full expansion by mystical union with God. "This is eternal life that ye may know . . . the only God and Jesus Christ" (St. John xvii. 3.). But while the

Greek philosophy conceived God as immanent in creation Christianity added that He is both immanent and transcendent. On the other hand, Christianity proclaimed that all creation is good —matter as well as spirit—and that it is only vitiated by the Fall. Greek philosophy acknowledged the existence of the Word, but Christians proclaimed with confidence that the Word had been made flesh and even now dwelt among them. "He was in the world and the world was made by Him" (St. John i. 20).

Man's need of a living faith was temporarily supplied for some minds by the fashionable adaptation of Eastern mystery cults, some of which bear a superficial resemblance to Christianity. These cults were tolerant of one another. But as between them and the Church there was always war to the death; the Catholic Church was well aware of its own historical origins and believed them to be divine. Thus she could unify all that was true in Greek and Roman religion and supply the divine life sought after by these Eastern forms of mysticism; not borrowing her doctrines from them but expressing her own truths in their language. For all their truths were hers by right, since her

Founder was Himself "the Beginning which also speaketh with thee" (St. John viii. 25).

In morals, for instance, an easier standard had been allowed by Moses because of the hardness of men's hearts: but Christ proclaimed that "from the beginning" it was not so (St. Mark x. 6) and so it could not be admitted in His Church. All truth was hers because it was His. This real "comprehensiveness" of the exclusive Catholic Church was a favourite theme of Cardinal Newman. When reproached with the charge that Catholicism contained doctrines which were to be found in Paganism, he admitted the fact, but added that they were not taken from Paganism. It was popularly supposed in his time that the very doctrine of the Trinity was to be found outside Christianity. Newman replies that even were this the case it would not make it less Christian. Christianity contains all truth at least implicitly and only recognises in Paganism distorted fragments of its own teaching. He states the objection in a striking passage:

> The doctrine of a Trinity is found both in the East and in the West; so is the ceremony of washing; so is the rite of sacrifice. The doctrine of a Divine Word is Platonic. The doctrine of an Incarnation is Indian;

> of a divine kingdom is Judaic; of angels and demons is Magian; the connection of sin with the body is Gnostic; celibacy is known to Bonze and Talapoin; a sacerdotal order is Egyptian; the idea of a new birth is Chinese and Eleusinian; belief in sacramental virtue is Pythagorean; and honours to the dead are a polytheism.

He states the conclusion of the latitudinarian or agnostic: "These things are in heathenism, therefore they are not Christian."

Then he proceeds in a characteristic way to show that all these facts can be readily admitted by one who takes the Christian view of the world —that these beliefs and rites are in truth Christian, though foreshadowed in God's Providence in heathenism.

> Scripture bears us out in saying that from the beginning the Moral Governor of the world scattered the seeds of truth far and wide over its extent: that these have variously taken root, and grown up as in the wilderness, wild plants indeed, but living; and hence that, as the inferior animals have tokens of an immaterial principle in them, yet have not souls, so the philosophies and religions of men have their life in certain true ideas, though they are not directly divine. What man is amid the brute creation, such is the Church among the schools

of the world; and as Adam gave names to the animals about him, so has the Church from the first looked round upon the earth, noting and visiting the doctrines she found there. She began in Chaldea, and then sojourned among the Canaanites, and went down into Egypt, and thence passed into Arabia, till she rested in her own land. Next she encountered the merchants of Tyre, and the wisdom of the East country, and the luxury of Sheba. Then she was carried away to Babylon and wandered to the schools of Greece. And wherever she went, in trouble or in triumph, still she was a living spirit, the mind and voice of the Most High, "sitting in the midst of the doctors both hearing them and asking them questions," claiming to herself what they said rightly, correcting their errors, supplying their defects, completing their beginnings, expanding their surmises, and thus gradually by means of them enlarging the range and refining the sense of her own teaching. So far then from her creed being of doubtful credit because it resembles foreign theologies, we even hold that one special way in which Providence has imparted divine knowledge to us has been by enabling her to draw and collect it together out of the world, and, in this sense, as in others, to "suck the milk of the Gentiles and to suck the breast of kings."[6]

[6] *Essays*, vol. ii., p. 231; quoted also by Newman himself in "Essay on Development," pp. 380-1.

SUPPLEMENT TO PART II

NATURE AND SUPERNATURE

The key to the paradoxes of Christianity is surely found in the doctrine of nature and grace. Grace completes nature; it does not destroy it. The so-called "natural" life of Paganism is really the life of nature left adrift without knowing its true goal or how to attain it. It is really a life centred in ourselves, whereas the life of grace is centred in God. This is the key to the endless paradoxes of the New Testament. A limited natural life has to be supplanted by a supernatural one. The grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die (St. John xii. 24). Thus Christianity is a gospel of life, but he that would gain his life must lose it (St. Matt. x. 39). It is a gospel of love: yet, "he that loveth father and mother more than Me is not worthy of Me" (St. Matt. x. 37), and we must be prepared, if necessary, to act as though we hated both father and mother, and our very life itself. It is a gospel of peace, yet Christ asks us: "think you I came to send peace upon the earth? I came not to send peace but the sword" (St. Matt. x. 34-35). And again in St. Luke (xii.

51), He defines His message as "not peace but division." This great underlying paradox of Christianity, the loss of the merely natural, simultaneously with the acquisition of supernatural life is clearly defined by St. Paul. He can speak of the Christian as "crucified with Christ" (Gal. ii. 20) and equally as "risen with Christ" (Col. iii. 1.). The "grace of Christ" delivers him from a "body of death" (Rom. viii. 24): "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?"

"The flesh lusteth against the spirit" (Gal. v. 17), that is, the natural man dominated by the flesh against the supernatural. This does not mean that spirit is good and flesh evil. There are spirits of wickedness, "principalities and powers." (Eph. vi. 12). Moreover, Christianity has its message of salvation for the body as well as the soul. Our very bodies are "temples of God." Therefore, "sanctify and bear God in your bodies" (I Cor. iii. 17). Moreover our bodies shall rise again. "But some men will say; how do the dead rise again? or with what manner of body shall they come? Senseless man, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die first. And that which thou sowest thou sowest not the body that shall be but bare grain as of wheat or

of some of the rest. But God giveth it a body as He will; and to every seed its proper body. . . . So also is the Resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour, it shall rise in glory. It is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power. It is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body" (I Cor. xv. 35, etc.).

Thus Christianity is a religion of life which tells us that we must die in order to live, a religion of love which demands our willingness to be separated from all that we love most. It is a religion of faith, yet God "will render to every man according to his works" (Rom. ii. 6). It is a religion of the spirit which insists on reverence for the body. These great paradoxes which underlie the whole Christian teaching are summed up by our Lord's words to Nicodemus in St. John's Gospel: "Unless a man be born again he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God" (St. John iii. 3). Our whole life must be renewed through a supernatural principle based upon a practical humiliation of self which acknowledges our nothingness by nature and our entire dependence on God's grace. By grace all things are ours: "the world and life and death, things present and things to come, all are yours

and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's" (I. Cor. iii. 22, 23). No wonder Pascal could say that, when once he had begun to understand Christianity his conquests in the world of science appeared mere "bagatelles."

The supernatural life demands a supernatural outlook. Pascal loved to quote Our Lord's words to the blind man in St. John (ix. 39): "For judgment I am come into this word that they who see not may see; and they who see may become blind," and he adds the comment that "they who see" means those who *think* they see. Thus as St. Paul reminds us "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (I Cor. iii. 19), just as the Gospel was "to the Greeks foolishness" (I Cor. i. 23). But in reality "the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (I Cor. i. 25).

These doctrines underlie the whole of the New Testament. They indicate the divine solution of man's life. They build upon man's nothingness and offer him the greatness which Adam rejected through pride. This is why "God hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise and the weak things to confound the strong" (I Cor. i. 27). Our Lord says to us: "Except you become as little children you

shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven" (St. Matt. xviii. 3), and He glories in this tremendous fact: "I thank Thee, Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes . . ." (St. Matt. xi. 25).

That then is the kind of appeal which the Gospel makes to the human intellect. Human reason must bow before the divine reason. The whole of man must be "born again" and not least his understanding. St. Paul says his reason was "brought into captivity" to Christ. Thus our human reason is offered sufficient evidence to make it perceive its own nothingness before the divine reason which completes and transcends it. Not that the truths of divine faith are *against* reason, though they often offend our imagination. Our Lord is continually appealing to evidence, and therefore to reason, in support of His claims. But when once those claims are accepted we must bow our heads before His teaching and receive it as little children, though we cannot fully understand it. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away" (St. Mark iii. 31). It is really an appeal from the wisdom of this passing world to that of a greater, where our soul and body shall find ful-

ness of life in "new heaven and a new earth" (II St. Peter iii. 13). That fulness of life is really offered to us here on earth during our time of trial—it has been won for us by Christ. "In Me you may have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation, but fear not, I have overcome the world" (St. John xvii. 33). So the Christian Saint can say, "I am crucified with Christ and I live; yet now not I but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20).

PART III

THE GOD-MAN

(*a*) *Approaching the Evidence*

Before examining its historical evidence we have ventured to indicate, however inadequately, the kind of solution which Christianity offers to the problem of human life. Our reason for doing this is that to the ordinary non-Christian the very idea of the Incarnation is the wildest of absurdities, and his natural instinct is to examine the New Testament with a presupposition against its more obvious meaning. This presupposition in favour of a purely "natural" explanation of Christianity is so strong that the average critic, outside the Church, is practially sure of his conclusions before weighing the evidence. The word "obvious" is applied by him to a method of interpretation which sometimes seems to strain the evidence almost beyond the breaking point and, what is yet more serious, deprives Christianity of all possible claims to be

the solution of life or anything more than a vague sanction for respectable living. We have therefore ventured to indicate that there is a real problem of which Christianity is perhaps the solution, providing as it does an outlook which can unify and complete the chief elements in man's religious aspirations and satisfy his needs. The attempts to solve the problem of life through philosophy, mysticism, and ethics, as well as the craving of the human heart expressed in revelation-myths and loving-saviour gods and rites and sacrifices: all these find their intellectual satisfaction in a system which is at once philosophical, mystical, and moral, and which has its roots firm in reason and history. The two great types of unification, monist and monotheist, find their completion and correction in a theology which recognizes God as immanent in nature and yet infinitely transcendent of it. The God of the Christians is at once infinitely greater and far more near and familiar than any other deity imagined by men. The Christian theology combines that belief in one great God and Creator which appears to have been the earliest expression of human religion with the craving for some kind of near personal saviour which is so common a feature of later

types. Above all, it combines the two great moral interpretations of man's life described by Pascal, the "real" view of his misery and the "ideal" view founded upon his greatness; and all this in a clear historic religion whose earliest characteristics were independence and intolerance of the world around it. This religion clearly ascribes to a man living in a particular time and place the claim to be the infinite God who had taken human nature and become truly man. It proclaimed moreover from the first that this God-Man had died a criminal's death.

But, it is asked, is the insane probability of this religion really diminished by showing, as Pascal attempts to do, that, if it were true, it would satisfy the needs of man? Is not man himself too small and insignificant a thing to make the impossible a probability?

This brings us back to a discussion of first principles. We admit that beside this colossal universe man appears infinitesimally small. But, then, before the universe of atoms he appears almost infinitely great. He is a nothing before the universe, but he is himself a Universe before other and smaller things. Mere size is not the measure of greatness. What is the dignity of bulk compared with the intelligence which

measures it? The problem of life exists only for man because he alone is possessed of intelligence. The earliest man known to us reflected, and neither mountains or beasts have ever shown the faintest disposition to do so. And this unique power of reflective intelligent activity is by far the greatest thing known to us.

But perhaps the greatest difficulty in our conception of the Incarnation lies in the infinity of God rather than in the insignificance of man. God is lord of all the stars and planets. Why should He be concerned with this one? The answer has been admirably expressed: "For other worlds God may have other words. For this world His Word is Christ."

Moreover, God is personal. He cannot have less of personality than I have; less of intelligence, life, will, and love. If our conception of Him is necessarily imperfect and anthropomorphic, it is at least the highest conception possible to our limited human minds. And if He would communicate Himself lovingly to us, is not the Incarnation at once the simplest and most sublime manner in which He could do so?

But, then, why this particular Jew who died a criminal's death two thousand years ago? Is it not an unworthy conception of God on earth?

Should we not expect glory, majesty, dominion? That again depends on our conception of greatness. If the highest thing known to us is reasonable action, should not the most perfect man be a man just perfectly good, a "faithful servant"? Is it not the only worthy manifestation of God, the only thing which suits God? What could glory and empire, in the earthly sense, add to this? Did He not come precisely to save our nature from sin and from the two roots of sin, pride and luxury? Hiddenness, poverty, suffering, death are surely the supreme remedy for the heart which is blinded by these.

Moreover, He came in the full light of history at the time when the world was becoming unified as it had never been before; when local faiths with their half-truths were collapsing on all sides; when man had reached his limit of greatness (and felt more than ever his own helplessness). And He showed that man's only real misery is sin. He Himself bore all other suffering willingly in order to redeem us from sin. "No man taketh (My life) from Me. But I lay it down of Myself, and I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it up again" (St. John x. 18). He showed that the problem of sin and suffering are really one, for sin can

be healed by suffering and sorrow itself can be turned into joy. Finally, He came of a race which had fought so long a fight for that monotheistic doctrine which He was to justify and universalise. This was the race of the Jews of whom according to the flesh Christ came, "Who is God over all things, blessed for ever" (Rom. ix. 5). To them He reveals God declaring that man can only know Him by revelation. "No man knoweth the Son but the Father, nor the Father but the Son and he to whom the Son shall have revealed Him" (St. Matt. xi. 27; St. Luke x. 22). Is there then sufficient reason to listen to His words? Have we sufficient grounds for believing in His existence in history or in His claims to our allegiance? What is this double revelation of the Son and of the Father which He claims to make, and how is it completed by the mission of the Holy Ghost and the foundation of His Church? In a word, what are the grounds of His "appeal to reason"?

(b) *The Nature of the Evidence*

Before considering the message of the four Gospels, however, we should perhaps indicate the kind of evidence on which we accept them merely

as human documents. Not that the Christian and Catholic faith depends upon them. It existed before they were written. It was delivered orally. The Church produced the Gospels, not *vice versa.* The Church interprets them and is the guarantor of their inspiration. But we are concerned with them here merely as human documents which confirm and illustrate the Church's tradition regarding her Founder and her origin.

The attack on the Gospels as historical documents has usually been on internal or "higher-critical" grounds, the grounds of "probability." The rationalists of the eighteenth century rejected them because of their plainly supernatural outlook and clear teaching of the miraculous. This position has been modified in our own age. It is generally admitted that apparently miraculous phenomena do occur, but that these can be explained by natural causes. The modern mind is far more deeply offended by the detailed supernatural theology of the Fourth Gospel than by the miraculous records of the other three. The modern critic feels as fully bound as his grandfather to explain Christianity "naturally." But to-day the "natural" is supposed to include all that was formerly regarded as supernatural; and though it is often admitted that no satisfactory

natural explanation has been found, say, for the evidence of the Resurrection, it is confidently assumed that such an explanation may be taken for granted and will some day probably be established. Here, then, we will only recall the external evidence for the Gospels admitted by all without discussing the speculations of higher critics.

The man in the street is still troubled by the fact that the earliest Greek Codex of the Gospels dates only from the fourth century. But, then, the earlier MS. of Horace dates from the seventh century. The earliest Euripides dates from the thirteenth! The Christian Gospels are in a far stronger position than the classics and their generally authentic character is to-day disputed by no serious scholar.

The earliest Christian literature known to us is scanty enough. But in the first seventy years of the Church we have Clement of Rome and Ignatius of Antioch who were clearly familiar with the whole of the New Testament. Papias of Hierapolis, the disciple of St. John, says that Mark, Peter's interpreter, wrote down what Peter told him and that Matthew wrote the sayings of the Lord in Hebrew. Irenaeus speaks of four

gospels and Justin Martyr of "Memoirs of the Apostles that are called gospels."

These writers of the second century took four gospels for granted, though heretics rejected some of these and chose others. St. Irenaeus however points to the witness of the heretics: in the first century St. Matthew is used by the Ebionites a..d St. Mark by "those who separate Jesus and Christ."

Perhaps the most striking recognition of these four records is the Diatesseron of Tatian (a disciple of St. Justin Martyr, 160-190 A.D.). It is simply a harmony of the four Gospels and was used liturgically in the East. Moreover it is clear that the four Gospels known to us were often used and copied in the fifty or so Apocryphal Gospels, twenty of which are known to us by fragments. The Gospels were carefully preserved and early translated. There is a Syrian text traceable (according to Professor Burkett) to about 150 A.D., while Tertullian (writing about 200 A.D.) speaks of an *old* Latin version. Moreover, none of these witnesses treats the Fourth Gospel as different in kind or in authority from the other three.

The problem, then, of fixing their exact dates is mainly concerned with *internal* evidence. Here

we must refrain from touching on so vast a controversy. It would carry us beyond the scope of this little book.[1] The dates most popularly ascribed to the New Testament documents today are probably those given by Professor Harnack.[2] This distinguished non-Catholic critic dates the Acts of the Apostles about 60 A.D. and certainly not later than 80 A.D. He attributes them to St. Luke. The "Acts" presuppose the composition of the Third Gospel, which itself presupposes the composition of St. Mark, and the *Logia,* or Sayings of Jesus, which he regards as the principle sources of our present St. Matthew.[3] He further ascribes the earliest of St. Paul's epistles (to the Thessalonians) to about the year 49 A.D.; those to the Romans and Corinthians before 54 A.D., and that to the Philippians between 57-59 A.D.

Though he ascribes the Fourth Gospel to a

[1] For a useful introduction to the whole subject we venture to recommend Dr. Felder's *Christ and the Critics,* Vol. I (English trans. Burns, Oates & Washbourne); also Dr. Arendzen's *The Gospels, Fact, Myth or Legend?* (Sands).

[2] See Harnack *Die Chronologie der Altchristlichen Ltieratur bis Eusebius,* I, II, C, I. (Leipzig, 1897, T.), p. 239, as well as the English translation of *Luke the Physician.*

[3] We are not venturing to discuss the relation of the Greek text of St. Matthew which we possess with the original Hebrew Gospel ascribed to him by Papias.

much later date, he describes it as an elucidated St. Matthew and adds: "If we have called St. John an elucidated St. Matthew because his aim also is didactic and apologetic, we may with equal justice call him an elucidated St. Mark and St. Luke, for he shares in the aims which dominate both these Evangelists. By means of the historical narrative he strives, like St. Mark, to show that Jesus is the Son of God, and, like St. Luke, to prove that He is the Saviour of the world, in opposition to the unbelieving Jews and the disciples of St. John the Baptist."[4]

It is surely permissible, then, for the plain man to look at the bulk of the New Testament documents as they stand and see for himself what picture they present.

The difficulty for very many in doing this, however, is that they approach these documents with strong preconceptions. The man who has never read the Gospels can often get a much fresher and clearer view of them than could the man who has heard them often and badly expounded. For instance, the ordinary man who has heard sermons on Christ's love for men (especially sermons of a vaguely evangelical type) often carries away the impression that

[4] *Luke the Physician* (2nd ed.), p. 168, note.

meekness and mildness are all that can be seen in the Gospel picture of Our Lord, and he does not like (or understand) either meekness or mildness! An admirable antidote for such minds is afforded by a book like Mr. G. K. Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man.*

Mr. Chesterton has written few things more striking than the chapter in this book called "The Riddles of the Gospel." He imagines a reader who has never heard the Gospels interpreted and who views them for the first time. What is the picture which he finds in them? Is it that represented by the devotion of the Church to a Saviour "meek and mild"? At first sight it appears something very different. There is a mystical sense in which that picture is true. But that sense has been so distorted by popular sentimentalism as to leave on the minds of those who do not read the Gospels for themselves the impression that Christ was a vague philanthropist who uttered platitudes about kindness. Very different surely is the first impression produced by a first serious reading of the Gospels themselves, so different and so terrible that men prefer not to speak of it:

> There is something insupportable even to the imagination in the idea of turning

the corner of a street or coming out into the spaces of a market-place to meet the petrifying glance of *that* figure as it turned upon a generation of vipers, or that face as it looked at the face of the hypocrite. The Church can reasonably be justified therefore if she turns the most merciful face or aspect towards men; but it is certainly the most merciful aspect that she does turn. . . . A man simply taking the words of the story as they stand would form quite another impression—an impression full of mystery and possibly of inconsistency; but certainly not merely an impression of mildness. It would be intensely interesting; but part of the interest would consist in its leaving a good deal to be guessed at or explained. It is full of sudden gestures evidently significant, except that we hardly know what they signify; of enigmatic silences; of ironical replies. The outbreaks of wrath, like storms above our atmosphere, do not seem to break out exactly where we should expect them, but to follow some higher weather-chart of their own. The Peter whom popular Church teaching presents is very rightly the Peter to whom Christ said in forgiveness, "Feed My lambs." He is not the Peter upon whom Christ turned as if he were the devil, crying in that obscure wrath, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Christ lamented with nothing but love and pity over Jerusalem which was to murder Him. We do not know what strange spiritual

> atmosphere or spiritual insight led him to sink Bethsaida lower in the pit than Sodom. I am putting aside for the moment all question of doctrinal inference or expositions, orthodox or otherwise; I am simply imagining the effect on a man's mind if he did really . . . read the New Testament without reference to orthodoxy and even without reference to doctrine.

How different is that picture from the popular conception of the "humanitarian" Christ! How little did Our Lord ever say which was consistent with the popular modern idea of Christianity as a religion of pacifism, socialism, prohibitionism, and the rest! How much did He say which is hopelessly inconsistent with it? Did he call on the Centurion to leave the army? Did he turn wine into water?

> What torrents of effortless eloquence would have flowed from [modern critics] to swell any slight superiority on the part of Martha [over Mary]; what splendid sermons about the Joy of Service and the Gospel of Work and the World left Better than We Found It, and generally all the ten thousand platitudes that can be uttered in favour of taking trouble—by people who need take no trouble to utter them. If in Mary the mystic and child of love Christ was guarding the seed of something more subtle, who was likely to understand it at

> the time? Nobody else could have seen Clare and Catherine and Teresa shining above the little roof at Bethany. It is so in another way with that magnificent menace about bringing into the world a sword to sunder and divide. Nobody could have guessed then either how it could be fulfilled or how it could be justified. Indeed, some free-thinkers are still so simple as to fall into the trap and be shocked at a phrase so deliberately defiant. They actually complain of the paradox for not being a platitude.

There are those who recognise the awful severity of the Christian moral code in regard to marriage and tell us that it is the morality of another age. Mr. Chesterton replies that it is rather the morality of another world:

> Christ in his view of marriage does not in the least suggest the conditions of Palestine in the first century . . . [His doctrine] was quite as difficult for people then as for people now. It was much more puzzling to people then than to people now. Whatever else is true, it is emphatically not true that the ideas of Jesus of Nazareth were suitable to His time but are no longer suitable to our time. Exactly how suitable they were to His time is perhaps suggested by the end of His story.

Mr. Chesterton maintains, then, that a man

reading the New Testament for the first time and without any of the presuppositions of modern Liberal Protestantism would *not* get the impression of what is often meant by a human Christ: "The merely human Christ is a made-up figure, a piece of artificial selection, like the merely evolutionary man. Moreover there have been too many of these human Christs found in the same story, just as there have been too many keys to mythology found in the same stories." The pictures of Christ as a teacher of pacificism or of communism or of Christian Science or prohibition or that of a mad prophet with a Messianic delusion are all equally unsatisfactory. Each is founded on a tiny fraction of the evidence. None of them really *results from* the evidence. Moreover, the vast majority of such human interpretations are *in spite* of the evidence. Each of these explanations is singularly inadequate; and yet

> taken together they do suggest something of the very mystery which they miss. There must surely have been something not only mysterious but many-sided about Christ if so many smaller Christs can be carved out of Him. If the Christian Scientist is satisfied with Him as a spiritual healer and the Christian Socialist is satisfied with Him

> as a social reformer, so satisfied that they do not even expect Him to be anything else, it looks as if He really covered rather more ground than they could be expected to expect. And it does seem to suggest that there might be more than they fancy in those other mysterious attributes of casting out devils or prophesying doom.

Surely this whole chapter is what the Master of Balliol in a review of the book called it, "admirable." [5] As Dr. Lindsay observes, "Mr. Chesterton is quite right in thinking that most of us are so used to the Gospels that we cannot read them with fresh eyes or realize the strange story they tell, and how unlike many things which Christ said are to the ordinary conceptions of Him. In that chapter on "The Riddles of the Gospel" Mr. Chesterton really has succeeded in standing back and looking at the facts as though for the first time. . . ."

(c) *The Claims of Christ*

If it is not impertinent, however, we would suggest that Mr. Chesterton's treatment of the Gospel picture would have been even more effective if he had attempted to meet the most

[5] "Mr. Chesterton looks at Mankind," by the Master of Balliol. The *Weekly Westminister*, October 10, 1925.

popular of modern objections. The man in the street who depends vaguely on second-hand conclusions for his estimate of Christianity is still under the impression that if only St. John's Gospel could be eliminated he could settle down comfortably to the belief that the Synoptic Gospels do give us a merely human Christ, and that, as Dr. Kirsopp Lake is at pains to inform us, "the Son of Man" merely means "a man." Christians, of course, have always believed that Our Lord was fully man as well as fully God. As St. Thomas Aquinas says, "The flesh of Christ was capable of suffering and death, and in consequence his soul was also capable of suffering . . . There is no doubt that Christ really felt pain . . . He could feel real sadness . . . and fear," though he adds that "these movements of the sensitive soul in Christ took place only according to the dictates of His reason and His reason could never be disturbed." The fact of Our Lord's humanity is, of course, as fully recognised by St. John as by the Synoptists. But this is utterly different from the popular conception of a merely "human Christ." Such a conception demands indeed an enormous struggle against the evidence, and can only be made even credible by dismissing much of the story in the

Synoptic Gospels themselves on the grounds that it is absurd. For instance, all the critics admit that all the sources give us most plainly the story of the loaves and fishes. Dr. Sanday admitted that from a documentary point of view it was as well authenticated as any fact in history. But such a miracle is so obviously absurd to those who regard Christ only as a man that it need not trouble them. The evidence is all one way, but the "obvious" conclusion is the other. This is but one instance out of so many.

Again, the story of the forgiveness of St. Mary Magdalen as given by St. Luke obviously assumes that Our Lord claimed to be God: a debt to God was a debt to Himself. Simon the Pharisee was shocked because Our Lord allowed a notorious sinner to approach Him and kiss His feet and show other signs of love. Our Lord replies, "Simon, I have somewhat to say to thee. . . . A certain creditor had two debtors, the one owed five hundred pence and the other fifty. And *whereas they had not wherewith to pay* he forgave both, which therefore of the two loveth him most?" Simon answered rightly, "I suppose he to whom he forgave most." Our Lord replies by pointing again to Magdalen's love and contrasting it with Simon's want of love, concluding,

"To whom less is forgiven he loveth less"; and then to her, "Thy sins are forgiven thee . . . thy faith hath made thee safe, go in peace." And the Pharisees (who were later to rend their garments at His "blasphemy") began to say within themselves, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" (St. Luke vii. 37-50). The more we examine this story in St. Luke the more meaningless it becomes if Christ did not claim to be God Himself. It throws, moreover, a yet clearer light on the claim to forgive sins as made in St. Mark (ii. 10).

But, then, Our Lord is always making such claims in the Synoptic Gospels. He speaks with "authority" (St. Mark i. 22) in His own name, not in the name of another. He claims to be greater then Jonas or Solomon or even the Temple itself (St. Matt. xii.). He is Lord of the Sabbath (St. Mark ii. 28; St. Matt. xii. 8). He is Master of the angels, to whom the Jews attributed so high a dignity (St. Matt. xiii. 41). He claims to develop the moral law given by God Himself (St. Matt. v. 21-22). He will judge the world (St. Matt. xvi. 27). He controls not only the elements of nature but even the devils in His own name, and allows others to cast them out in His name. Where two or three

are gathered together He will be in the midst (St. Matt. xviii. 20). No man may love father or mother more than Him (St. Matt. x. 37). He claims to satisfy the human heart, "Come unto Me" (St. Matt. xi. 28). He would have gathered Jerusalem as a hen gathers her "chickens." In the parable He treats the Prophets as God's servants, but Himself as the natural heir of the Master of the Vineyard (St. Matt. xxi. 27-40). He tells us that He saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven (St. Luke x. 18). He is David's Son indeed; but He is also David's Lord (St. Mark xii. 35-37). He is a victim but a willing victim: "Thinkest thou that I cannot ask my Father and He will presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (St. Matt. xxvi. 53). Heaven and earth shall pass away but His word shall not pass away (St. Mark xiii. 31). He is put to death for the reiteration of His "blasphemous" claims. But He cannot be explained or even understood as one man is understood by another. "All things are delivered to Me by the Father. And no one knoweth the Son but the Father: neither doth anyone know the Father but the Son and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal Him" (St. Matt. xi. 27;

St. Luke x. 22). What evidence is left for the merely human Christ?

Is there after all any essential difference between these claims and those made in the Fourth Gospel? He who was David's Lord and who saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven could surely say, "before Abraham was, I am" (St. John viii. 58), and could elucidate His claims by calling Himself "the Beginning, which also speaketh with Thee" (St. John viii. 25). He who was Lord of angels and devils, who could walk upon the sea, who promised that He would judge the world and who, finally, claimed to share God's incomprehensible nature (St. Luke x.; St. Matt. xi.) can hardly surprise us when He says, "The Father and I are one thing" (St. John x. 30), and, "He that seeth Me seeth the Father also" (St. John xii. 45). He who said in the garden, "Think you not that I could ask My Father and He would give me more than twelve legions of angels," could surely say, "I lay down My life for My sheep: no man taketh it from Me. But I lay it down of Myself and I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it up again" (St. John x. 15-18). He for whom the sins of the Magdalen were a debt to Himself which He himself had power to

remit could surely read the heart of the Samaritan. He who could say, "Come unto Me all ye who labour" (St. Matt. xi. 28), could surely say, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." (St. John xiv. 6). Surely Harnack is right when he says that the Fourth Gospel is only an elucidation of the other three.

Of course, there is the passage which to most men is the supreme difficulty: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (St. Matt. xxvii. 46). But, when we remember that the whole Christian contention rests on the doctrine that, as Man, Christ bore the fulness of suffering and that to the spiritual mind this abandonment or "dark night" is by far the most real form of suffering, we should surely expect that He would endure it. Moreover, if we complete the prophetic psalm from which it comes (and which Our Lord may well have been reciting during those last hours) we see that it contains the prophecy of His triumph as well as of His dereliction. It describes His sufferings indeed: "They pierced my hands and my feet . . . they look and stare upon me . . . they part my garments among them and cast lots upon my vesture"; but it goes on to say, "My praise shall be of Thee in a great congregation . . . all the ends of the

earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord." . . . They shall come and declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, etc." (A. V. Psalms xxii.). This note of triumph marks all the prophecies, whether Our Lord's own description of His passion and resurrection or the great passages of the Old Testament. But the fulness of suffering had first to be endured.

Such words of His had to be appealed to by the Church against the heretics who could not believe that Our Lord was truly human as well as truly divine. Yet His humanity is quite as much insisted upon in St. John and in St. Paul as in the Synoptic Gospels, and nobody doubts that St. John believed that Christ was God, "the Word was God . . . all things were made by Him . . . and the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us" (St. John i.), or St. Paul who called Him "God over all things, blessed for ever" (Rom. ix. 5). Yet the true nature of this doctrine of a divine Person who was also truly man is obviously beyond our understanding. We accept it as true because it is revealed to us by an authority in which we can reasonably trust. "No man knoweth the Son but the Father and no man know-

eth the Father but the Son and he to whom the Son should have revealed Him." (St. Luke x.; St. Matt. xi.). It is Christ who reveals both Himself and the Father.

Aut Deus aut non bonus. Mr. Chesterton uses this old Augustinian argument which no modern psychological theory can really affect: Christ clearly claimed to be God as well as man. Therefore He was deluded or wicked if He was not God.[6] Megalomania is however the last thing which commonly goes with an exquisite delicacy and balance of mind like His. Moreover, Christ's insistence on His comparative nothingness as man is quite as striking as His insistence on His own God-Head: "If I glorify Myself, My honour is nothing," etc. (St. John viii. 54). But the supreme justification of His claims, the ground of His appeal to reason is twofold: (1) The fact of the resurrection which he foretold, and (2) the impression He made upon the disciples and upon mankind. We will for a moment, then, consider these.

[6] Mr. Chesterton is rightly impatient of those who would ascribe to Our Lord merely some higher degree of a "divinity" attributed to all men. "It were better," he writes, "to rend our robes with a great cry like Caiaphas in the judgment . . . than to stand stupidly debating fine shades of pantheism in the presence of so catastrophic a claim."

(d) *The Gospel of the Resurrection*

It has been said that without the resurrection Christianity would have been an event more miraculous than the resurrection itself. Its almost incredibly rapid spread throughout the Roman world, into Spain and Italy, and soon after into Gaul and Germany, in spite of every obstacle, can only be described as an explosion of human energy. And all this was inspired by a belief that Jesus Christ had proved His claims to God-Head by rising from the tomb.

In the very year of Our Lord's death (according to Harnack) St. Stephen cries aloud, "I see the heavens open and the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of God." Then the Jews, "crying out with a loud voice stopped their ears and with one accord ran violently upon him. And casting him forth without the city, they stoned him, and the witnesses laid their garments at the feet of a young man whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, invoking and saying, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit" (Acts vii. 55-60). A new spirit had entered into the disciple and into their leader who had once denied Christ.

The disciples necessarily concerned themselves

with proving Our Lord to be Messiah before they could convince the world of His divinity. Yet even in doing this they call Him as a matter of course "the Prince of Life" (Acts ii. 31-36). They preach his resurrection as a proof that He is "both Lord and Christ" (Acts ii. 31-36). There is no opposition among the Christians to the expressions used by St. Paul when he says:

> [that God] hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the remission of sins: Who is *the image of the invisible God,* the first-born of every creature: for *in Him were all things created in heaven and on earth,* visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominations, or principalities or powers: *all things were created by Him and in Him:* and He is before all and *by Him all things consist.* And He is *head of the body, the Church who* is *the beginning, the first-born from the dead:* that in all things He may hold the primacy: because in Him it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell: and *through Him to reconcile all things to Himself,* making peace through the blood of His cross, both as for the things that are on earth and the things that are in heaven" (Col. i. 13-20).

But as much of modern destructive criticism

would regard Paul and not Christ as the founder of Catholicism let us turn to other witnesses. In the Acts we find it preached that "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). Christ is not merely a holy man but He is "the Holy One," the Just, the Prince of Life (Acts iii. 14-15). He is "Judge of the quick and the dead" (x. 42). He gives "repentance and forgiveness of sins" (v. 31). He enjoys with God the title of Lord (iv. 33, v. 9-14). He is exalted by the right hand of God and enjoys with Him both power and dominion (ii. 35, vii. 58-59).

The New Testament and especially St. Paul (like the Church of all the ages) is filled with the praise of Christ as man: the second Adam who leads mankind back to God. St. Peter speaks of Him as "on the right hand of God swallowing down death that we might be made heirs of life everlasting, being gone into heaven, the angels and powers and virtues being made subject to Him" (I St. Peter iii. 22). This is a typical passage.

Of our "lively hope" (our redemption through the God-Man) the resurrection is the supreme witness (I St. Peter i. 3). We may be excused

then from quoting at length St. Paul's exposition of this gospel of the risen Christ:

> I delivered unto you first of all, which I also received: How that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures: and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures: and that He was seen by Cephas; and after that by the eleven. Then was He seen by more than five hundred brethren at once; of whom many remain until this present, and some are fallen asleep. After that, He was seen by James, then by all the Apostles. And last of all He was seen by me, as by one born out of due time. . . . . Now if Christ be preached that He rose again from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen again. And if Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have given testimony against God, that He hath raised up Christ; Whom He hath not raised up if the dead rise not again. For if the dead rise not again, neither is Christ risen again. And if Christ be not risen again, your faith is vain, for you are yet in your sins. . . . But now Christ is risen from the dead, the first-fruits of them that sleep. For by a man came death, and by a man the resurrection of the dead. And as

> in Adam all died, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. But everyone in his own order: the first-fruits Christ, then they that are of Christ, who have believed in His coming. Afterwards the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God and the Father, when He shall have brought to nought all principality, and power, and virtue. For He must reign, until He hath put all His enemies under His feet. And the enemy death shall be destroyed last, for He hath put all things under His feet. And whereas He saith, all things are put under Him, undoubtedly he is excepted who put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then the Son Himself shall be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all (I Cor. xv.).

For St. Paul everything depends on the resurrection, and the resurrection is proved by a great body of evidence to which he appeals. His testimony is, with slight additions, a summary of the evidence given in the four Gospels. No one at the time questioned this evidence or his appeal to witnesses still living, although the believers had to suffer persecution for accepting it.

But why is the fact of the resurrection of such capital importance? Because Christ Himself had so often appealed to it. It was therefore the justification of His claims as God, as well as of

His humiliation and acceptance of the fulness of human misery. And yet it came as a surprise, a shock to the imagination. The Apostles are unconvinced by the narrative of the holy women and Our Lord had to convince them Himself by showing them His pierced hands and feet (St. Luke xxiv. 39) and by eating the fish with them (St. Luke xxiv. 42). The slight apparent discrepancies in the narrative only add to their value as independent testimonies. We have at least three different sources: the holy women, the twelve Apostles, the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, as well as the five hundred alluded to by St. Paul. The Romans and Jews have to offer an explanation of the undoubted fact of the empty tomb, and their explanation, that the disciples stole the body, is a clumsy one. This is still the best explanation offered to account for the empty tomb. The eighteenth century, however, substituted the suggestion that Our Lord had not died but only swooned (Paulus, Hase, etc.).

The modern method of explaining the rest of the story on grounds of hallucination still demands some special treatment of the difficulty presented by the empty tomb. According to Loisy, Our Lord was never buried: the body was

thrown into a ditch with the bodies of other criminals. Dr. Kirsopp Lake thinks that the disciples mistook the tomb. None of these theories is really satisfactory, for two reasons: (1) They fail really to account for the *kind of effect* produced by the evidence at the time and since. They are ingenious attempts to eliminate the supernatural belonging rather to the natural bias of our imagination than to reason; and (2) to the theist who does believe that Christianity has produced great and beneficent spiritual effects, they suggest that Divine Providence made use of a gigantic fraud to produce these spiritual effects. In other words, they attribute to God a doctrine which our grandfathers attributed to the Society of Jesus, namely, that the end justifies the means!

We admit with Canon Streeter that, other things being equal, a natural explanation must always be sought before the admission of a supernatural one. But we cannot agree with the conclusion he draws. He admits that no "definite suggestion" (for a natural explanation of the evidence for the resurrection) "has any claim to be regarded as in ITSELF particularly probable, but where a natural explanation of an event is at all possible there must be very special reasons for falling back upon an explanation of a super-

natural character." [7] The Canon pleads for "a little ingenuity" in finding such an explanation. But do not the consistently supernatural character of the Christian religion itself, the promises of Christ, and the very character of the resurrection as the supreme disproof of mere naturalism constitute "very special reasons" for accepting such overwhelming evidence?

The Fourth Gospel records how St. Thomas was unwilling to accept any other evidence than that of sight and touch, a kind of test which could not possibly be applied to historical evidence. The testimony of the twelve might suffice for reason but did not satisfy the imagination. Sight and touch were accorded him by his risen Lord, but with rebuke, "because thou hast seen, Thomas, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have *not* seen and have believed" (St. John xx. 20).

Belief on such evidence is then a reasonable act, however much it may disturb the imagination; and the Church in all ages has replied with Thomas: "My Lord and my God." The whole Catholic conception of the sanctity of the body which shares Christ's risen life in the Holy Eucharist is built upon the fact that He is risen

[7] *Foundations*, pp. 134, 140.

from the tomb. To millions in every age the fact of the empty tomb is (as Harnack has pointed out) the pledge of personal immortality. Do not these things constitute "very special reasons" for accepting such evidence?

PART IV

THE MIND OF THE CHURCH

"The history of the Church should rightly be called the history of Truth," wrote Pascal.[1]

As we have seen, he regarded Christianity as the divine wisdom wherein alone the half-truths of human wisdom could find their reconciliation. The history of the Church is, then, the history of the relations between this divine and human wisdom, between the mind of Christ and the mind of the world. The Church says with St. Paul, "we have the mind of Christ" (I Cor. ii. 16). And the whole history of the Church has been a resistance to those who would "divide Christ."* Almost all the greater heresies are attempts to do this. They are built (in accordance with Pascal's law) either on the greatness or on the misery of man. There are first the heresies in regard to the Person of Christ. Some in denying His God-Head would exalt Him as the supreme type of human greatness, the proof of

[1] P. 728.

man's moral dignity; others would deny His true humanity and cast the misery of our nature at His feet as God and Saviour. And, similarly, some would insist, like the Pelagians, on the dignity of the human will, minimising the effects of the Fall and the need of grace, whilst others would despair of man's moral capabilities and cast all hope on God and on our predestination through His grace. Against all these the Church protests by reaffirmations and fuller definitions of her traditional doctrines.

Moreover, the same may be said of systems which exalt spirit to the detriment of matter or matter to the detriment of spirit, of philosophies which exalt tradition and deny reason on the one hand and those which treat reason as all-sufficing on the other. Traditionalism and rationalism are equally condemned in order to preserve both reason and tradition. As Mr. Chesterton has admirably expressed it, the condemnation of a heresy is always the protection of a larger liberty.

But this whole conception rests on belief in a visible Teaching Church with power to speak with Christ's authority. Have Catholics any reasonable ground for belief in the existence of such a teaching authority in the world to-day? To many a Catholic the Church herself is the

supreme argument for the truth of Christianity, and indeed for the existence of a God of righteousness. In a world which, in its effect on the imagination, seems to give the lie to these great truths, the Church stands as "the concrete representative of things invisible." [2]

This little book has been an attempt to show the lines along which the Catholic Church makes her appeal to reason. In Part I, it was urged that faith in truths which are beyond reason may be a thoroughly reasonable act. In Part II, the possibility of a reasonable faith in the unique claim of Christianity as a doctrine of life was considered. In Part III, the reader was reminded that the available evidence is for and not against the traditional interpretation of the Gospel. In this chapter it may be well to consider certain principles of Catholicism which are often misunderstood or overlooked in contemporary discussions.

The first of these is the principle of doctrinal authority in the Catholic Church. For instance, critics of the Church often draw analogies—fa-

[2] The phrase is Newman's. But the normal Catholic sense of the "obviousness" of the Church is expressed by Pascal when he says, "It is impossible that those who love God with all their heart should misunderstand the Church, *which is so evident*" (p. 724).

vourable or unfavourable—between the constitution of the Church and that of various secular states. Such analogies seem to me fundamentally unsatisfactory, since the primary claim of the Church to witness to a supernatural life and to the unchanging truths on which that life depends is clearly of a different nature from the aim and object of any secular state. The whole Catholic position rests on belief in a living Church which is infallible in her teaching because founded by the God-Man.

This does not, of course, imply that the individual Catholic or even the Pope, pretends to be able to comprehend the mind of God. In the words of Pope Pius IX, "Far be it from us that we should wish to sound the hidden counsels and judgments of God, which are deep abysses that cannot be fathomed by human thought." (Allocution, December 9th, 1854). And the late Pope, in his first encyclical, condemned those who "have reached such a degree of rashness as not to hesitate to measure by the standard of their own mind even the hidden things of God and all that God has revealed to men." Nor does this contradict the assertion of Pius X that "faith is a true assent of the intelligence to truth." Faith

is not against reason, but reason is limited and is incomplete without faith.

Let me quote a paragraph from a distinguished Catholic theologian, Father Cuthbert, O.S.F.C., on the central idea of Catholicism and its character as a revelation:

> The conception of Christianity as directly of supernatural origin and character is fundamental to the Catholic position. The Christian revelation is not and never could be derived from the operation of man's own reason. The most complete content of human reason left to itself is circumscribed by the created finite world in which our natural existence lies: and the Christian revelation carries us beyond that into the higher life of conscious union with God Himself. In this supernatural life, there is a transformation of values both as regards ourselves and the world in which we live, a transformation brought about by the direct operation of the Divine Spirit through Jesus Christ. Christ as the Divine Word is the giver of this new life to us; we are and ever shall be merely recipients. The centre and source of this new life is always outside ourselves in Christ the manifested Word of God to man. If, then, we seek for the sufficient reason and guide to this higher life, we find it not in ourselves but in Christ alone, and our ultimate salvation lies not in the fuller or fullest realisation

> of our natural self but in the apprehension of the life which is in Christ.
>
> [But] it is indeed the case that as we receive the truth from Christ, our reason will be informed by it and become one with it: and this truth will manifest itself more and more in terms of our own reason; yet always our reason will remain dependent for its knowledge upon the revealing life of Christ in whom alone this truth is revealed in an absolute sense; Christ being Himself the Truth, the Way and the Life.[3]

This Truth, revealed in Christ, is apprehended by the mind of the Church. Different elements in it will doubtless appeal more forcibly to different individual minds. Thus St. Paul emphasizes certain doctrines more forcibly than does St. John. But the truths apprehended are not mere subjective impressions. They are themselves as unchangeable as the truths of Euclid.

Newman has expressed this point in an interesting paragraph:

"The idea which represents an object or supposed object is commensurate with the sum total of its possible aspects, however they may vary in the separate consciousness of individuals; and in proportion to the variety of aspects under

[3] *The Principle of Authority*, pp. 3-4.

which it presents itself to various minds is its force and depth and the argument for its reality"[4]

Thus those unchangeable revealed truths which are realised by the mind of the Church will gradually be apprehended with greater fulness till an entire theology is developed. Individuals will apply them to further problems and draw from them further deductions. If such applications and deductions are legitimate they will preserve the original idea and merely apply it further. If they are illegitimate they will contradict and ultimately destroy the original idea. These false deductions are called "heresies."

Now, whenever such false deductions become popular, the Church must have the power to make a further and more comprehensive definition of its original tradition—comprehensive enough to exclude the new heretical deduction.

These definitions seem something like hair-splitting to the outsider. Thus we read in Froude's biography how in earlier years Carlyle had spoken contemptuously of the Athanasian controversy, of the Christian world torn in pieces over a diphthong, and he would ring the changes in broad Annandale on the

[4] *Development of Doctrine*, p. 55.

Homoousion and the Homoiousion. "He told me now that he perceived Christianity itself to have been at stake. If the Arians had won, it would have dwindled away into a legend." [5]

Hence the solemn definitions of the mind of the Church that have been made by Popes on historic occasions—definitions not merely of the mind of the contemporary Church but of the historic tradition of faith. On the rare occasions when the Pope makes such a definition he employs every human means to ascertain the tradition of faith as well as the mind of the contemporary Church. But when he makes his final definition he is protected by the Holy Spirit from committing the Church to error. This is what is meant by Papal Infallibility. The Pope cannot invent new doctrines nor impose new ideals of devotion. He can only define the mind of the Church. But when he has done so in this solemn manner his decision is irreformable and not subject to the subsequent consent or disavowal of the Church. His is the final court of appeal, and was recognised as such even in the early days of the Church, when so little had been defined and so many points, now clear, were wrapped in some ob-

[5] *Carlyle*, vol. ii, p. 494.

scurity.[6] In the very fragmentary literature left to us from the first four Christian centuries there is valuable evidence of this. In the second century, for instance, St. Irenaeus, writing about Rome, says: By "pointing out . . . that faith announced to all men (Rom. i. 8) which through the succession of her bishops has come down to us, we confound all those who in any way, whether through caprice or vainglory or blindness or perverse opinion, gather otherwise than it behoveth. For with this Church, on account of her more powerful headship, it is necessary that every Church, that is, the faithful everywhere dispersed, should agree (or 'come together'); in which Church has always been preserved that tradition which is from the apostles."[7]

Papal definitions are rare and, as I have said, they are preceded by a thorough investigation of the mind of the Church. They do not invent new doctrine. But, when the full conditions are fulfilled, they are final. As Father Cuthbert has well said, "As a matter of fact all organic societies appeal to their tradition as a witness to their true idea and purpose. But, in the Church, there

[6] See Fortescue's *Papacy in the First Four Centuries;* also Dom Chapman's *The First Eight General Councils and Papal Infallibility.*

[7] Haer. iii, 3 A.D., 185.

is the further claim that this tradition is divinely safeguarded against the errors of human judgment through the organic union of the Church with Christ as the animating and informing principle of its life."

Naturally, these definitions of the Church's mind are inadequate expressions of the divine reality and cover only a comparatively few, though the most vital issues.

In all else the normal mode of advance in the intellectual apprehension of religious truth is free discussion. As the late Pope has said, "Where there is room for divergent opinions it is clearly the right of everyone to express and defend his own opinion. . . . Let each one freely defend his own opinion, but let it be done with due moderation, so that no one should consider himself entitled to affix on those who merely do not agree with his own ideas the stigma of disloyalty to faith and to discipline."

Development is then a natural process in the Church. But when such development leads to heresy (*i.e.* to deductions which would undermine the original Christian faith) authority has the right to intervene. Apart from the actual definitions of faith, such intervention is often disciplinary, by way of condemnation or direc-

tion, and on the whole it is rare except in times of crisis, as when the whole historic faith was threatened by the principles of Modernism. Such crises are naturally more frequent in an unbelieving age when the Church is in what Saint Teresa called a "state of siege."

But the whole conception of Catholic development by which, as Newman said, the Church changes in order to remain the same, is clearly the antithesis of the Modernist conception, which, retaining the ancient creeds, invests them with a different meaning. The one regards the Church's revelation as absolutely true (though inadequately expressed), the other as purely relative and indeed subjective.

To the Catholic Christian, Our Lord is the Incarnation of the Divine Word or Reason in which alone the apparently contradictory truths of human wisdom will find their ultimate reconciliation. Thus in answer to those who complained about certain Catholic doctrines that "These things are in heathenism; therefore they are not Christian," Newman replied, "These things are in Christianity; therefore they are not heathen." The Church is ultimately the "touchstone" of religious truth. Thus she is Catholic in a threefold sense, being commissioned by

Christ to teach (1) all nations, (2) all that He has commanded, and (3) in all ages (St. Matt. xxviii. 19). Her mission is to "a numberless flock indeed, comprising in different ways the whole human race. For the whole of mankind was freed from the slavery of sin by the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ as their ransom, and there is no one who is excluded from the benefit of this Redemption." [8]

Her duty is to proclaim the good news to all men of good will, *as well as* to convert the sinner. Of course there are sins of the intellect. But "we must hold as certain," wrote Pius IX, "that invincible ignorance is not a sin in the sight of God. Who will dare to arrogate to himself the right of determining the exact limits of such ignorance when he considers the infinitely varied and unfathomable influence of social environment, character, and so many other circumstances upon which it depends." [9]

The Catholic maintains then that only the full faith of the Church is true; yet that all men are called to partake of Truth and even of "eternal life," though incompletely in this world. If it be asked what peculiar benefits the Catholic

[8] Benedict XV's first encyclical.

[9] Allocution "Singulari Quadam," December 29th, 1854.

gains from his special gift of the fulness of truth and life, we need only point to those who have accepted that truth and lived that life to the uttermost; I mean the Saints. It is they, above all, who glory in the Church as the mystical Body of Christ.

But, whether founded on divine fact or human fancy, the Catholic Church bears the same features to-day as when St. Irenaeus wrote of her in the second century:

> The Church, extended to the boundaries of the earth, received her faith from the Apostles and their disciples. Having received she carefully retains it as if dwelling in one house, as possessing one soul and heart: the same faith she delivers and teaches with one accord, and as if gifted with one tongue; for though in the world there are various modes of speech, the tradition of doctrine is one and the same. In the Churches of Germany, in those of Spain and Gaul, in those of the East, of Egypt and of Africa, and in the middle regions, is the same belief, the same teaching. For as the world is enlightened by one sun, so does the preaching of one faith enlighten all men that are willing to come to the knowledge of Truth. Nor among the pastors of the Church, does he that is eloquent deliver other doctrine, for no one is above his

> master; nor does he that is weak in speech diminish the truth of tradition.[10]

But is not this boast of unity the very same as that made by St. Paul in the previous century:

> He gave some Apostles, and some prophets, and others some evangelists, and others some pastors and doctors, for the perfection of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ; until we all meet into the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ: that henceforth we be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the wickedness of men, by cunning and craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive. But doing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up in Him Who is the Head, even Christ; from Whom the whole body, being compacted and fitly joined together by what every joint supplieth, according to the operation of the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in charity (Eph. iv. 4-16).[11]

Let us conclude with a passage of the great

[10] Adversus Haereses L. I. C. X.

[11] To those who complained in a later age that the Church had failed, that her unity was gone, St. Augustine replied, "What insolence! Is she no longer because thou art not a member? She shall be though thou be not" (*Enarrat. in Psal.* 101 *Ser. ii*).

Pascal, which must be given in his own French tongue since it speaks of that which is most intimate to him. In it he reminds us that whilst the Faith makes its appeal to reason it demands of us something in the moral order as its practical complement: "Il y a trois moyens de croire: la raison, la coutume, l'inspiration. La religion chrétienne, qui seule a la raison, n'admet pas pour ses vrais enfants ceux qui croient sans inspiration; ce n'est pas qu'elle exclue la raison et la coutume, au contraire; mais il faut *ouvrir son esprit aux preuves, s'y confirmer par la coutume,* mais *s'offrir par les humiliations aux inspirations,* qui seules peuvent faire le vrai et salutaire effet: *Ne evacuetur crux Christi.*" This surely was the way of all the Saints. Such was their "reasonable service."

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